THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) Former U.S. President Bill Clinton paid a private visit to India from 3–10 April, 2001 as part of the delegation of the American India Foundation of which he is a Board member. The visit was in connection with rehabilitation and reconstruction in Gujarat in the aftermath of the earthquake.

(b) and (c) While in India, Mr. Clinton made a courtesy call on the Governor of Gujarat and interacted with the Chief Minister of Gujarat. In Calcutta, he met the Governor of West Bengal. In New Delhi, former President Clinton called on the Prime Minister to discuss rehabilitation efforts in Gujarat.

(d) The visit was a private one and its programme was organised by the American India Foundation. Government accorded due courtesies befitting a former Head of Government.

(e) Government is not aware of the quantum of relief that has been received by the earthquake victims of Gujarat, as the American India Foundation has not made its funds available to either the State or the Central Government.

Deputation as Haj Assistants

4189. MISS FRIDA TOPNO : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria for selection of Government employees on deputation as 'Haj Assistants' to Saudi Arabia;

(b) the number of employees deputed as 'Haj Assistants' during the last three years and proposed to be deputed for ensuring Haj 2002;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to increase the number of Haj Assistants keeping in view of increasing number of pilgrims;

(d) whether it is a fact that Central Government have blacklisted officials of any Government/Semi-Government/Autonomous bodies for non-consideration of selection as Haj Assistants; and

(e) if so, the norms for blacklisting them and names of such Organizations and reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) The criteria is that the applicant

should be a medically fit Central/State Government employee, not more than 45 years of age as on 1st January of the year of Haj, holding a non-gazetted post not below the grade of Upper Division Clerk of Central Government or equivalent. Preference is given to applicants having knowledge of regional languages and experience in public relations.

(b) The number of Haj Assistants deputed during 1999 to 2001 are as follows :—

Year	Number of Haj Assistants
1999	106
2000	125
2001	116

For the Haj 2002, 125 'Haj Assistants' are proposed to be deputed.

(c) Marginal increase as compared to last year has been proposed.

(d) No, Madam.

(e) Question does not arise.

China's desire to join SAARC

4190. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has again expressed its desire to join the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); and

(b) if so, what is Government's response thereto by way of sponsoring or supporting China's entry into SAARC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Indo-Malaysian Agreement

4191. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH :
SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Malaysia have signed seven agreements during the recent visit of Prime Minister to that country;